Factors Affecting Feedback Satisfaction

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Abstract

Feedback is an essential tool that supervisors use in performance management to help employees improve their performance and behavior. Nonetheless, reactions to feedback can highly affect outcomes of performance management. Especially, impacts can be very powerful if feedback receivers develop positive attitudes, namely, feedback satisfaction.

The purpose of this study is to explore factors that influence feedback satisfaction. Data have been collected from 279 employees working in various organizations. Results show that trust in supervisor, perceived supervisor support, and participation in feedback significantly affect feedback satisfaction respectively. It also suggests that supervisors play very critical role to enhance positive outcomes of feedback.

Keywords: Feedback, Feedback satisfaction, Participation in feedback, Perceived supervisor support, Trust in Supervisor, Performance management

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Introduction

In workplaces, feedback is very valuable information about past performance and behaviors. Feedback is widely used as a tool in the performance management process to boost employees' performance and self-esteem. A body of literature attests to its relevance. For example, feedback contribute to motivation (Lee, 2019), job satisfaction (Sommer, & Kulkarni, 2012), organizational commitment (Audenaert, Van der Heijden, Rombaut, & Van Thielen, 2021), and job performance (Brown, Hyatt, & Benson, 2010). However, outcomes of feedback depends on employees' attitudes towards feedback. When employees value feedback, they tend to use feedback to improve their performance. On the other hand, employees show resistance and discouragement when they think that feedback is unfair. Thus, it is important to understand what factors contribute to employees' attitudes towards feedback, namely feedback satisfaction.

The purpose of this study is to examine impacts of participation in feedback, perceived supervisor support, and trust in supervisor on feedback satisfaction as shown in Figure 1. In addition, it explores how feedback giving context i.e., place and channel of feedback giving influence feedback satisfaction of employees.
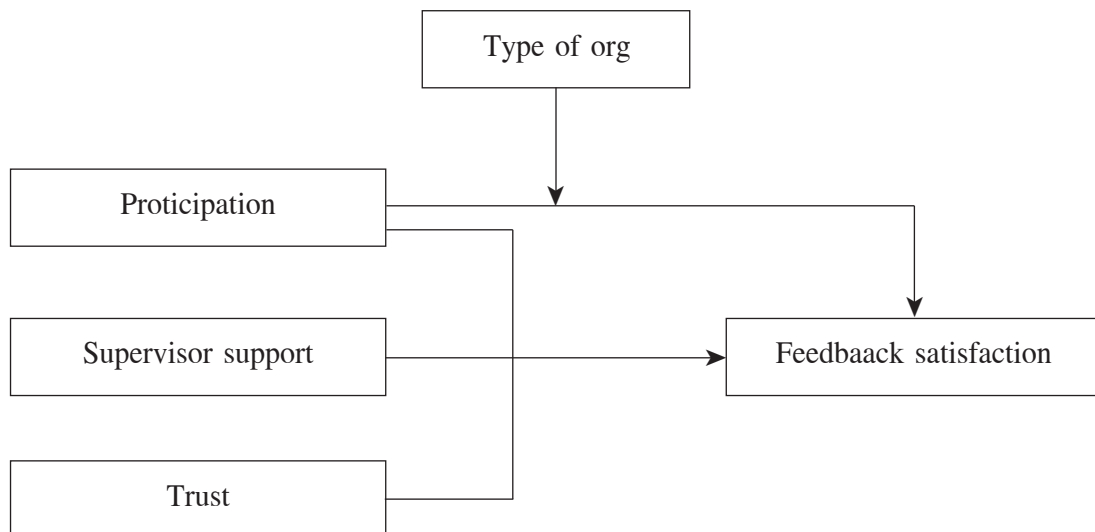

Figure 1: Research model

Feedback

Feedback is a way of passing on information to an individual about their past performance. It is a way to increase positive performance and give suggestion if needed. (Barth & Beer, 2018). In fact, it is necessary in coaching process, meaningful feedback does not only give comments about past performance and performance expectations, but it also boosts motivation and reinforces favorable behaviors. Employees' ability to understand feedback and employees' attitudes toward feedback also influence effectiveness of feedback (London, 2003). According to Barth & Beer (2018), feedback in coaching is a critical part of performance management process to help employees maintain and develop their performance.

Besides these aspects of behavioral development, there are several impacts that feedback can be beneficial to both employees and organizations. According to Kaymaz (2011), feedback positively affects employee motivation by reducing ambiguity in performance. Giving feedback to employees also builds employees' self-esteem because they feel important in teams. Self-esteem can then increase self- confidence and result in their performance. (Barth & Beer, 2018). However, not all feedback have positive feedback. Its effects depend on how employees react to feedback and performance appraisal system. For example, it is found that emotional reactions mediate the relationship between feedback and counterproductive behavior, turnover intentions, citizenship, and affective commitment (Belschak, & Den Hartog, 2009).

Participation in feedback and types of organization

Participation is another form of employee involvement. It provides an opportunity for employees to voice their opinions, regardless of outcome (Cawley, Keeping, & Levy, 1998). Participation is important in performance management process. It do not only has value-expressive purpose as mentioned earlier, but also instrumental purpose such that it allows joint setting performance standards between raters and ratees and employee self-appraisal. Participation in the performance interview or feedback provides an opportunity for employees to exchange information with supervisors in feedback session. Two-way communication between supervisors and employees can easily create perception of

procedural, distributive, and interactional justice (Singh, 2018). Pichler (2012) studied performance appraisal and appraisal reactions, which included perception of accuracy, fairness, and satisfaction and he found that participation related to positive perceptions. Another study found that participation in performance management caused perceived fairness in feedback sessions, and in turn, fairness in feedback sessions caused feedback satisfaction (Sudin, 2011).

The origin of formal appraisal was the western world (Vallance, 1999). Supervisors need to deliver honest evaluation to employees. Employees also have the right to ask or challenge the appraisal. However, it can be different when having a look into the non-western style of appraisal. In most Asian cultures, it is important to avoid hurting others' feelings or raise conflicts. Asian supervisors may feel reluctant to give negative feedback or try to adjust feedback to be less negative. They also tend to delay feedback (Larson, 1986). In turn, a distortion or delayed feedback can affect feedback satisfaction. In Thailand, there are three major types of organizations, namely, government/state enterprise, Thai company, and foreign company. Climates in organizations can be different among organizations. Government/state enterprises and Thai companies are highly influenced by Thai culture while foreign company climates are shaped by their headquarters. For example, most western cultures are low power distance (Hofstede, 1993) so they tend to treat employees equally regardless of positions in organizations. While, Thai culture highly values seniority and it can cause hierarchy in Thai working culture (Wetprasit, 2016). Influences of Thai culture can be very strong in government/state enterprise and become a barrier for employees to express their opinion or speak up in the feedback session. As a result, employees may experience negative feelings of feedback. In other word, employees working in different type of organizations tend to respond differently to participation in feedback sessions. It leads to

Hypothesis 1: Type of organization, namely, state enterprise, government organization, Thai organizations, and foreign organizations, will have a moderating effect on the relationship between perceived participation in feedback and feedback satisfaction.

Participation in feedback, Perceived supervisor support, and Trust in supervisor

According to Kleingeld, Tuijl, & Algera (2004), participation in performance management affect performance management effectiveness. They used a quasi-experimental design with a participation, a tell-and-sell, and a control condition in their study; they found that average performance increased in the participation condition. More specifically, performance in the tell-and-sell condition was significantly higher than other conditions. In addition, satisfaction with the program, and perceived usefulness of the feedback were significantly higher in the participation condition. When employees are given opportunities to share their opinions, it is likely that they feel valued and then satisfied with the feedback.

Feedback is required information to exchange between supervisors and employees. Therefore, relationship quality between supervisors and employees play important roles in giving and receiving feedback. Both parties can build good relationships in several ways, including supporting each other. Perceived supervisor support can strengthen their relationships. Perceived supervisor support is employees' perception of careness from their supervisors that may involve their well-being and their contributions in the workplace. Kottke & Sharafinski, (1988), and Beenen, Pichler, & Levy (2016) found that perceived supervisor support is positively associated with employee feedback seeking behavior. Consistent to Beenen, Pichler, & Levy (2016), supervisor support links to the self-determined feedback seeking. Feedback-seeking behavior allow employees to have more task autonomy, informal feedback, and building relationship with supervisors. Consequently, subordinates tends to develop feedback satisfaction.

Trust is one of the supervisor-employee relation characteristics (Choi, Moon, & Nae, 2014). According to Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, (1995), trust is the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to actions of another party based on the expectations that the other will perform a particular action important to trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control other party. It can be categorized into two types (1) affected-based trust: emotional bond that is more than reasonable bond, and (2) cognition-based trust: performance, competency or reliability related. Both cognition-and affect-based trust are

positively influenced the feedback-seeking behavior (Choi, Moon, & Nae, 2014). In addition, Pichler (2012) used meta-analysis to study social context in performance evaluation and found that aspects of rater-ratee relationship quality (i.e., supervisor satisfaction, supervisor support, supervisor trust) were strongly related to ratee reactions to performance appraisals. It leads to

Hypothesis 2: Perceived participation, perceived supervisor support, and trust in supervisor will have a positive effect on feedback satisfaction.

Method

Respondents and procedure

Population of the study was individuals who are employed in organizations. According to the summary of the labor force survey in Thailand as of January 2020 (Bank of Thailand, 2020), there were 37.18 million people as employed labor forces in Thailand. Data was collected by using purposive sampling to ensure that it covered all types of organizations in the study: online questionnaires were sent to specific groups who worked in all state enterprise, government organizations, Thai organizations, and foreign organizations. Total respondents were 279. 56.3% of respondents are female and 43.7% of respondents were male. Half of the respondents, 52%, were between 25 to 30 years old. 28.3% of respondents were 40 years old and above, 12.2% of respondents were 31 to 35 years old, 4.7% of respondents were less than 25 years old, and 2.9% of respondents were between 36 to 40 years old. Majority (70.6%) got bachelor's degrees.

Regarding type of organization, almost half of the respondents (42.3%) were working for state enterprise or government organizations. The rest worked for foreign companies (31.5%) and Thai companies (23.3%). 32.6% of respondents had two to four years of organizational tenure; 31.5% of the respondents had > 8 years of organizational tenure; 24.7% of the respondents had less than 2 years organizational tenure, 11.1%, of the respondents had 5 to 7 years organizational tenure.

Measures

Thai version of the original English instruments were created by two of the authors, who are experienced translators and familiar with the research literature. Double blind, back-translation procedure was employed. All items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Perceived participation in feedback.

We used 11 items developed by Greller (1978) to measure perceived participation in feedback. Examples of items are "The supervisor and you share responsibility for the way the feedback went," "Your supervisor invited your opinion when he/she gives feedback to you" and "After getting feedback, you made suggestions about how the job might be done differently". Cronbach's alpha for these 11 questions was 0.935.

Perceived supervisor support

Perceived supervisor support was measured by three items developed by Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, (2001) to measure perceived participation in feedback. Examples of items are "Your supervisor cares about your opinions," and "Your supervisor really cares about your well-being," Cronbach's alpha was 0.924.

Trust in supervisor

Trust in supervisor was measured by 10 items developed by Mcallister (1995) Examples of items are "You and your supervisor can discuss all matters in the workplace and you feel that both sides want to listen to each other" and "You think that you and your supervisor are trying to build a good relationship". Cronbach's alpha was 0.907.

Feedback satisfaction was measured by three items developed by Harris, & Schaubroeck (1988) to measure perceived participation in feedback. Items are "My performance rating for this year represent a fair and accurate picture of my job performance", "You feel acceptance and satisfaction as a result of the performance appraisal made by your supervisor" and one reverse score question is "You feel defensive and resentful as a result of the performance appraisal made by your supervisor." Cronbach's alpha was 0.737.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for the study variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Perceived participation in feedback	5.424	1.157	1			
Perceived supervisor support	5.264	1.395	.791**	1		
Trust in supervisor	5.212	1.105	.703**	.807**	1	
Feedback satisfaction	4.922	1.723	.613**	.669**	.683**	1

Note. N=279. ** $p < .01$

Hypothesis testing

To test moderating effect of organizational type on relationship between perceived participation in feedback and feedback satisfaction, we ran interaction test. Results indicated that interaction effect was not significant (F= 0.7741, p > 0.05). Therefore, H1 is not supported.

H2 was tested by using stepwise multiple regression analysis; three models have been tested by adding each independent variable into the model depending on relationships with the dependent variables. Results showed that none of independent variables was removed. As shown in Table 2, the best model was model 3, which trust in supervisor, perceived supervisor support, and received participation in feedback, were independent variables. When looking into multiple correlations (R) in model 3, trust in supervisor, received participation in feedback, and perceived supervisor support are related to feedback satisfaction (R = 0.718). When these three independent variables combined, it had the predictive power at 51.6% (R^2 = 0.516).

Table 2: Model summary of finding the predictor/independent variable that influence feedback satisfaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.683[a]	.467	.465	.9440
2	.712[b]	.507	.503	.9098
3	.718[c]	.516	.510	.9032

a. Predictor: (Constant), Trust in Supervisor

b. Predictor: (Constant), Trust in Supervisor, Perceived Supervisor Support

c. Predictor: (Constant), Trust in Supervisor, Perceived Supervisor Support, Perceived Participation in Feedback

d. Dependent Variable: Employee Satisfaction towards feedback

Next stepwise regression was used to test how independent variables predict a dependent variable. As shown in Table 3, the multiple correlation is 0.718, the predictive power at 51.6% (R^2 = .516), the standard error of the estimate is 0.9032. Three predictors, trust in supervisor, perceived supervisor support, and perceived participation in feedback, significantly influenced feedback satisfaction. In addition, the highest variance inflation factor (VIF) is equal to 4.014, which is less than 10. The lowest tolerance was 0.249, which was more than 0.2. It indicated that there was no multicollinearity issue (Field, 2009). The regression equations and the regression equations in the form of standard scores are shown as below.

$$\text{Feedback satisfaction} = 0.826 + 0.446 \text{ (trust in supervisor)}$$
$$+ 0.219 \text{ (perceived supervisor support)}$$
$$+ 0.176 \text{ (perceived participation in feedback)}$$

$$Z_{\text{Employee satisfaction towards feedback}} = 0.382 \, (Z_{\text{trust in supervisor}})$$
$$+ 0.236 \, (Z_{\text{perceived supervisor support}})$$
$$+ 0.157 \, (Z_{\text{perceived participation in feedback}})$$

Table 3: The result of using stepwise multiple regression to find the predictor/independent variable that influence employee satisfaction toward feedback

Independent Variables	b	Beta	t	Sig.
Trust in supervisor	.446	.382	5.823	.000
Perceived supervisor support	.219	.236	2.812	.005
Perceived participation in feedback	.176	.157	2.257	.025
Constant	.826		2.849	.005
$R = .718 \; R^2 = .516 \; R^2_{adj} = .510 \; F = 97.574$ Std. Error of the Estimate = .9032				

Additional tests furthermore, the study also collected additional data to explore how feedback giving contexts affected feedback satisfaction. Interestingly, results show that feedback giving contexts (place and channel of feedback giving) also affected feedback satisfaction. Results show that feedback satisfaction means are significantly different when feedback was given in different places. There were four places in the study, supervisor's office, employees' workstations, pantry, and meeting room. The result from one-way ANOVA (p-value is < 0.05) showed that feedback satisfaction was highest when it was given in meeting rooms (M=5.651); feedback satisfaction was lowest when it was given in supervisors' office (M =5.004). Regarding channels of feedback giving, results (p-value is < 0.05) showed that different channels yielded different levels of feedback satisfaction. Data reveals that most of the employees received their performance evaluation result and feedback by face-to-face conversations. Employees who received performance evaluation results and feedback from both face-to-face conversation and email/letter had the highest levels of feedback satisfaction (M = 5.556). Followed by employees who received performance evaluation result and feedback from face to face conversation, mean of feedback satisfaction was 5.477. Employees who received performance evaluation results and feedback from email/letter only showed the lowest mean of feedback satisfaction (M = 5.02).

Conclusion and Discussion

Our goal for this study is to examine how supervisors, as feedback givers, can affect feedback satisfaction. In addition, it was expected that types of organizations could

play roles in reactions of feedback receivers. Results show that type of organization did not significantly moderate relationship between perceived participation in feedback and feedback satisfaction. One alternative explanation can be due to organizational culture. More specifically, types and origins of host company may not be the only factors that influence organizational climate. For example, not all Thai organizations operate exactly in the same way nor American companies have the same climate. Each organization has uniqueness and their climates that may influence how their employees respond to feedback.

Roles of supervisors, namely perceived participation, perceived supervisor support, and trust in supervisor, significantly affected feedback satisfaction. The most strongest variable that predicted feedback satisfaction is trust in supervisor. Consistent to what Choi, Moon, & Nae (2014) found, trust in supervisor positively influence feedback-seeking behaviors because employees believe that feedback comes from credible sources. Once employees perceived the value of feedback, this can imply that they will be satisfied with the feedback. Therefore, trust in supervisor is an important element that supervisors should take into account when they give feedback and work with employees. They should build trust and maintain trust.

The second strongest variable that predicted feedback satisfaction is perceived supervisor support. When supervisor show that they support and listen to employees, it creates positive reciprocal relationships between supervisors and employees. Hence, employees tend to develop positive attitudes in the workplace. Consistent to Jordan (1990), there is a positive relationship between supervisors' character of supporting employees, appraisal satisfaction, and feedback satisfaction. In addition, perceived supervisor support moderates the justice-supervisor trust relationship (Byrne, Pitts, Wilson, & Steiner, 2012) and it has a positive relationship with feedback satisfaction (Sudin, 2011)

Regarding perceived participation in feedback, results show that it positively affected feedback satisfaction. This means that if employees has a chance to speak up their minds or what they see, they are more likely to have feedback satisfaction. Consistent to studies of Cawley, Keeping, & Levy (1998) and Pichler (2012). They found that appraisal participation were related to appraisal reaction, i.e., satisfaction. In addition, Pichler (2012) suggests that appraisal participation is moderately related

to appraisal reaction. Perceiving participation in feedback does bring perception of accuracy and fairness, which then leads to employee satisfaction towards feedback.

In summary, trust in supervisor, perceived supervisor support, and perceived participation are extremely important to create feedback satisfaction. In other words, what supervisors act in a feedback session make a big difference on employee reactions and responses. Interactions between employees and supervisors, including how much support and trust between them, are also important. Moreover, it is not only "how" but "where" is also crucial to feedback satisfaction. Feedback satisfaction is higher when feedback is given in meeting rooms. Meeting rooms are private and quite so they are suitable and easily provide positive atmosphere. Whereas, a place that a supervisor should avoid is their office. Lastly, medium of communication can help to increase feedback satisfaction. Employees who received performance evaluation result via more than one channels, which are face to face conversation and email or letter, have higher feedback satisfaction than receiving feedback via only one channel such as face to face conversation or email. Supervisors should, therefore, avoid giving feedback by sending only letter of email. This channel is not information rich and considered one-way communication. It is hard to convey clear message and make feedback receivers fully understand. Results of the study provide guideline for supervisors to effectively manage employees' response to feedback and in turn, improve employees' behavior and performance. Future research may include other factors such as leadership styles and time of giving feedback to further study how they can affect feedback satisfaction.

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